

THE
NATURE
OF THE
WORK OF GOD;
CONSIDERED IN A
SERMON
ON
ACTS xiii. 41.

By ^KJOHN BEAUMONT.

If this Work be of Men, it will come to Nought;
but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. Acts. v. 38.

NOTTINGHAM:
PRINTED by C. SUTTON,
1796.

Price, Three-pence.

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ACTS. xiii. 41.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

IN all ages of the world, God has ever had his witnesses, although at times, it has seemed, as if they were nearly cut off from the earth. Elijah, thought himself the only one in his day, until the Lord told him, that he had reserved seven thousand, who had not bowed their knee unto Baal.

In the days of some of the Prophets, true religion was at a very low ebb; and from what we learn in Scripture history, the labours of several of the messengers of God, were attended with but little success: insomuch, that even Elijah begged of the Lord to take away his life, saying, "*I am not better than my Fathers.*" 1 Kings, xix. 4. The Prophet Habakkuk, was so distressed to see no more fruit of his labours,

that he would have been cast down beyond measure, only he comforted himself with these considerations. Chap. iii. 17. 18 *"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."* A consciousness of his own fidelity to God and his cause, supported him, notwithstanding the small success of his labours.

The ministry of some of the Prophets fell out in very difficult times; hence, Elijah said to Elisha, just before he was taken from him, *"Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away."* 2 Kings, ii. 9. The old Prophet knew that Elisha's ministry would be attended with opposition; as Ahab and Jezebel were devoted to idolatry, sorcery and persecution: therefore he was well persuaded, that Elisha would need particular assistance from above; both to qualify him for his ministry, and to prepare him to stand stedfast in death, in case he should be called to it.

The civil power, in the days of the Apostles being unfavourable to religion, Saint Paul himself declared, he had to fight with beasts at Ephesus; he had to contend with men of a fierce disposition, such were the false prophets and blaspheming Jews mentioned in this chapter who opposed his preaching, and to whom he addressed the words of the text. *"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work that ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."* From this text, I will endeavour to shew:—

- I. What this work is, that God works in our days.
- II. Who are the persons that despise it.
- III. Why they despise it.

IV. What

IV. What will be the consequence.

V. Draw some inferences from the whole.

I. What this work is.

A work of conviction, conversion and sanctification.

1. A work of conviction in the hearts of sinners.

The word of God, is compared to a hammer, a fire, and a two edged sword, dividing betwixt the soul and sin: "*Entering between the joints of the harness.*" The means most commonly used in awakening sinners, is the preaching of the word; but so far is the Lord from confining himself, to one particular method of convincing mankind, that some times the most unpromising incidents are improved for that end.

The Lord proclaims himself by the voice of nature; for it is evident, the most barbarous nations know the difference betwixt good and evil, vice and virtue, honesty and dishonesty. Again, the Lord speaks by Revelation, and makes use of various ways to reveal his will. Dreams and visions; mercies and judgments; afflictions of body; disappointments in life; the conversion of friends, or the death of relations; all, or any of these occurrences may be instrumental, by the grace of God, in the conversion of a sinner: and happy are they who hear his voice in these things.

When the spirit of God, brings any of these things to a sinner's conscience, it inclines him to consider his ways, and be wise; and thereby becomes deeply convinced of sin. The spirituality of the law appears in its proper light, and becomes his schoolmaster to bring him to Christ. In this situation, he is ready to enquire of any one, "*Have you seen him whom my soul desireth to love.*"

Deep seriousness, self examination, hearty contrition, and importunate prayer, are some of his prevailing exercises; and he can seldom live a day, if even an hour, without exercising one or all of them. Thus he is a proper subject for the Saviour: for Christ came into the world to seek and save sinners, and such he is altogether in his own eyes: therefore, his constant cry is, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

2. A work of conversion (or justification) in the hearts of mourners.

The mean of justification on our part, is faith. The spirit is the author, the heart is the seat, Christ is the object, and love is the distinguishing character. Thereby we apprehend Christ for our justification, and are able to call God, "Father by the Holy Ghost." We are then made new creatures in Christ Jesus; "*Old things are past away, behold, all things become new.*"

Our faith does not only justify, but enables us to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, as we are said to live by faith in the son of God; it is not one act of faith, but continued believing, that keeps the soul alive to God. The more we exercise our faith upon God and his word, the stronger it will grow; hence we are said, to go from faith to faith, from grace to grace. Whatever difficulties we meet in the way, faith is able to surmount them; as it sees things invisible, believes things (which seem) incredible, performs things impossible, (to human power) and endures things insupportable.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees;

"And looks to that alone:

"Laughs at impossibilities,

"And cries, *it shall be done.*"

3. A work of sanctification in the hearts of believers.

Absolute perfection belongs to God alone, and all beings are imperfect, when they are compared to him. Therefore, the work of sanctification, is not the perfection of God: nor is it the perfection of angels, nor of Adam in Paradise; nor a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood: but, it signifies to have the *"Same mind that was in Christ, to walk as Christ walked; to have clean hands and a pure heart: to be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit."* Such as are sanctified in body, soul and spirit, *"walk in the light, as he is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth them from all sin."*

This work of sanctification, supposes a heart so influenced with the love of God, as continually to offer up every thought, word and work, as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ. Such persons in every thought of their hearts, in every word of their tongues, and in every work of their hands, *"Shew forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."* Those who have arrived at such heights, depths, breadths and lengths of the salvation of God, must be the most useful both in public and private life; as the love of Christ continually constrains them to do good.

But even this, as well as justification, cannot be kept, unless persons live in the constant exercise of that grace already received; and whenever this blessed state is lost, it is for want of exercising the graces of it.

There is no doctrine in the Christian religion, against which more objections have been raised, than that of sanctification; and yet, not so much against the thing itself,

itself, as the time, the manner, and the means of receiving it. But a doctrine so glorious in its nature, and so advantageous in its effects, we should never be ashamed of.

The reason why most believers rest short of it is, because they do not see the need of it, they still keep some accursed thing, or indwelling sin, is not yet become sufficiently intolerable. They do not believe that the Lord both can and will make them clean, or that now is the accepted time. They have some faith, but not that degree, which makes them sell all, deny themselves, and continue instant in prayer for the blessing. Pressing the point, and pleading those promises, that relate to that state, are the most effectual means to obtain it.

There are some, even among religious people, who do not think favourably of this kind of importunity, but be assured, this is the most speedy, and effectual way, of obtaining the blessings of the gospel. Observe the difference, between those who have this fervor, and those who speak against it. The former, prosper most in their own souls:—their graces amazingly increase, and their gifts exceedingly improve. The others, go on in the old dull track, neither happy in their souls, nor very useful in their labours: therefore, experience and matter of fact both testify, that the former extreme is much the best.

'Tis probable, luke-warm professors, and those who would have no part of religion, but what they call *strictly rational*, may deride your ignorance, pride, and presumption; but go on in the name of the Lord, and bring all the souls you can to Jesus Christ: remembering, all your sufficiency is of God. Keep low at the feet of Christ,

and in your own eyes; but strong in faith, giving glory to God, and 'tis not known, in what an extraordinary degree, the Lord may make you useful in the conversion of men.

The Lord, has certainly chosen the weak things of the world, and things that are base, to confound those that are mighty, that no flesh might glory in his presence: By such weak instruments, we are more forcibly convinced the work is of God. This, as well as justification is received by faith, and we may continually grow in it, until we become matured and filled with all the fulness of God.

II. I now proceed to shew, who are the despisers of this work?

I. All open sinners. There needs no argument to prove, that these despise the work. "They declare their sin as Sodom; and carry the mark of the beast in their forehead." The gratification of their senses, passions and appetites, is what they are in continual pursuit of; and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. "They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be made manifest." They plead in behalf of their carnal pleasures, and cry out, for Barabbas, but let Christ and his religion be embraced by others, not by them, they have other things on mind. Religion, is what they have no inclination for; consequently they despise and reject the counsel of God against themselves. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They are more ready to heap all manner of reproach upon the godly, and to consider them as the off-scouring of the world, than to embrace their doctrines.

All

2. All Pharisees despise it.

These go about to establish their own righteousness, seek to be justified by the law, are building upon the sand, have a form of godliness without the power, and will not submit to the righteousness of God by faith. They warm themselves by the sparks of their own kindling," of whom it is said, "They shall lie down in sorrow." They have no idea of justification by faith: therefore, not only despise and reject the doctrine, but those that preach it.

How often do we find such sitting in the scorner's chair; although they do not care to stand forward themselves in opposing and persecuting; yet they frequently encourage those who will be so fool hardy, as to become their tools: and, 'tis not uncommon to find some of those, who even call themselves by the sacred title of the MINISTERS OF CHURCH, among the number.

3. All who are wise in their own eyes, reject and despise it.

They think ~~they~~ they are the men, and wisdom will die with them. Were they not such as these, our Lord alluded to? when he said, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth; because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so Father, for it seemed good in thy sight." Matt. xi. 25. These men, are like the vain philosophers, Saint Paul warned Timothy against. They may have a competency of learning; understand the works of nature and those of art; and be able to account for many things upon mere natural principles; and puff themselves up with an high conceit of their own acquisitions; at least,

they

they know so much, as tends to make them despise the doctrines of the cross. Thus the preaching of the cross was foolishness to the Greeks, because they could not account for its doctrines upon natural principles: and their successors despise and reject it, imagining every one to be deceived who are led by such doctrines. But, only observe what the Apostle says, "*We testify the things that we have seen, and our hands have handled the word of life: we have tasted the good word of God, and have felt the powers of the world to come.*"

4. Those despise it in general, who have a little of the riches, power, and honours of this world. Our Saviour said, "*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*" Not that the thing is impossible with God; but it is so difficult, for men of this description, to see and feel true poverty of spirit. For such to descend to the simplicity of a child;—to lay down all their consequence;—to acknowledge they know nothing as they ought, and humanly speaking, to become a fool for Christ: this is like "*Plucking out the right eye, and like cutting off the right hand.*" Nothing but the power of divine grace can do that.

How common is it for such PETTY GENTRY to be more proud and absolute than despotic kings. What a parade do they make about exercising their power and dominion over the lower orders of men, as if they were only their vassals and slaves; and all this, lest their imaginary grandeur, should pass unnoticed in the world. Those who have got into little offices, and who have thereby a sort of pre-eminence over the lower class of mankind; usually exercise tyranny and persecution over those

those who embrace christianity more than the ancient tyrants themselves.

5. *Luke-warm professors despise this work.*

They never experienced such a powerful work upon their own souls, and accordingly judge, all who profess such great things are deceived: therefore, when they see or hear of others, who make such a stir about these things, they are offended and despise both them and their work. They accuse them of pride and ostentation, and endeavour to lessen all their excellencies. If they have any usefulness, or fruit of their labours, they frequently put the worst construction on it: and if they cannot deny and contradict it, yet they will raise all the obstacles against it imaginable; saying, *Such do not know themselves, they will cool in a while, they will see better in time: they are now on the mount, but must come down.*

They cannot bear to see others more noticed than themselves, therefore endeavour to magnify all their infirmities: and when they cannot either deny or contradict the work; and also, that such instruments are of great use; yet, they will speak of it with such coolness, indifference, and some times even ridicule, as to make every one who hears them believe, that such a work is far more in appearance than reality. It is evident in this particular, the scriptures are verified: "The first shall be last, and last first." Thereby, the pride of such professors is sorely mortified; consequently, they despise and wonder: and there are instances, where such withdraw themselves from the people, supposing they will be better out than in church-fellowship with such.

11. I shall

III I shall attempt to give some reasons, why they despise this work.

1. Because of the meanness of these instruments, by which God carries on this work in the world; they being generally poor, and unlearned men: such as fishermen and tent-makers. To see such men as these, set up for teachers in the church, is the height of presumption; and suppose, they who will be content to hear such persons, are as much deceived as their teachers. Were their ministers men of learning, abilities, and literary talents, we would sooner believe it to be a work of God: but when they are devoid of these, it requires too great a stretch of our faith, to believe they are sent of God.

But let us enquire a little what these teachers pretend to know, in order to give them the least probability of success in the world.

1. They have the knowledge of themselves. They know they were sinners; and that unless they had been converted, they would not have been saved.

2. They have the knowledge of God. They know Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life. *John xvii.* 3. They are born of incorruptible seed; are passed from death unto life, and experience an assurance of the divine favour. They have the witness of this work in themselves, and are assured of their title to heaven.

3. They have a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel. They are well read in the scriptures of truth; consequently, are sufficiently acquainted with the divine will. They may not understand the meaning of every
B difficult

difficult passage in the scriptures; but the doctrinal, experimental, and practical parts they are well instructed in: and from their own experience in these things, are able to declare them with authority to the people.

4. They have an ardent love for souls. "The zeal of God's house eats them up; and the love of Christ constraineth them." They are men of faith, of courage of zeal and fortitude in the cause of God; and are willing to hazard their lives in the defence of religion. They are indefatigable in their duty, and more inclined to suffer hardships, than to covet the favour of men. They are men of calm and even tempers; and have a firmness and constancy of mind, that will not be discouraged by opposition.

5. If to these qualifications, there be added, a knowledge of different languages, and sciences; these being sanctified, will greatly help a man to be a burning and shining light in the church. Such become able defenders of the christian religion, and are capable of eminent usefulness in the cause of God. Great talents, as well as great riches, become a snare to many that are favoured with them. But instead of being proud of them, we have need to fear and tremble, lest they should not do the good for which they were intended; and so meet with the same reproof which the man did, that had hidden his talent in the earth: Talents, are not given so much for a man's own use, as the good of others: therefore, they who possess them, should not forget the words of Christ. *Many shall say unto me in that day, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy*

thy name done many wonderful works; and yet he will say unto them, *I never knew you.*"

It has generally been found, in all ages, that plain men, with moderate talents, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, have been the most serviceable in the work of conversion. The others, may be particularly useful in building up the Church; in unravelling the mysteries of revelation; in reconciling seeming contradictions; unfolding the intricate mazes of the heart, and laying open the devices of Satan. By these means, the church of God is built up in her most holy faith. No one man appears to possess all the talents requisite to build up the church; therefore, the Apostle informs us, "*To some he gave Apostles, to some teachers, &c. and all for the building up of the Body of Christ.*"

The plan of Itinerant preaching, is certainly the most calculated for general usefulness; and happy are those churches, who are favoured in this particular; it not only promotes variety, but is an excellent mean of keeping up the attention of the people.

2. Another reason why many despise this work, is because of the meanness of those persons who are the subjects of it, in general the poor. Were they men of wealth and respectability; men of honour and established credit, of universal good report, that were the subjects of this work; then it would not be so disgusting. But, when they are chiefly the poor; and some of the most abandoned characters; yea, even the very refuse of the people; it is so degrading to human nature, and all the feelings of wisdom; that it becomes a matter of prudent economy to have little or nothing to do with such a description

of people. However, let us not forget, or overlook the words of Jesus Christ, "*The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*" The souls of the poor, as well as the rich, are equally valuable in the sight of God. God is no respecter of persons, "*The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them all.*" Therefore, to despise the work of God, because of the poverty of those who embrace it; argues the height of pride and folly;—evils rarely to be cured.

3. Another reason, is, because this work is so suddenly effected in the hearts of some sinners, Perhaps, convinced and converted to God in a few days. Therefore, they wonder, and cry out, "How can these things be?"

To see a profligate sinner, a bitter persecutor one day, and in a few days after to be convinced and converted to God! This is a thing so unaccountable and incredible, that they judge it must be a delusion: not remembering such instances as Saul of Tarsus, the Jailor, and the three thousand pricked to the heart under one sermon: beside multitudes that were added to the church daily. If the spirit of God could effect such a great work, in so short a time in the Apostles days; why may he not now? The Lord's work is the same; and so are the means to effect it.

4. Another reason, why persons despise this work, is because of the reproaches those people meet with, who profess to experience it. The world can hardly invent any thing too bad for religious people; consequently they are often laying to the charge of the godly, the evils, which themselves are most addicted to.

Again,

Again, if any person falls from his steadfastness, and becomes a scandal to religion, it affords great occasion for the enemies of God to blaspheme; a circumstance of this kind, seldom fails to cast such an odium upon the cause, as is not readily wiped off.

5. Another reason why some despise it, is the irregularities that sometimes accompany this work, some praying, some singing, and others crying out in loud and bitter lamentations; all at the same time. Where the work is very rapid, there are at times so many of these irregularities, that they give great disgust to some timorous minds. They readily think, as God is not the author of confusion, but of peace; therefore, all such disorder must be offensive in his sight: not considering, that God looks at the heart; and where such agitations spring from the powerful operations of the spirit, they cannot be displeasing to him. Besides, the passions of men are soon affected; and not unfrequently one by another; particularly, where any one is powerfully wrought upon by strong convictions; if they give vent to them, it will frequently have a great effect upon others. Some are of opinion, that it is the best way, not to suppress them from what some call prudential motives, but apply to God and the faithful, for immediate help; as those are commonly soonest brought into gospel liberty.

Again, having never seen any particular work of this kind before, may be one reason why they are sooner offended; for, as it is contrary to any thing that they have ever seen, 'tis natural for them to be disgusted.

6. Another reason, why some are offended and despise it, is because they feel no happiness in it themselves; perhaps

so, and are you assured the fault is not your own? 'Tis very probable, you may be mere spectators, and not real worshippers; and if so, it is no wonder that you feel no happiness in it.

Now, were you heartily to join with those who are in deep distress, and offering importunate prayers; and consider yourselves deeply interested in it, either for yourselves, or those in distress; I am persuaded that you would no longer find it confusion, but truly worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

Again, perhaps you have prejudices against such a work already; if so, your mind was steel'd beforehand against receiving any benefit; therefore, you came with no expectations of receiving good, and consequently, no wonder why you cannot profit by such meetings.

Again, we should not have our feelings hurt, by seeing the same number of persons equally distressed, or rejoicing, were they every one in different apartments; and pray where can be the difference in the sight of God? Is not the matter equally the same to him, whether they be altogether in one, or different places? Therefore, this objection arises from comparing God with ourselves. Let us consider, the Lord views all the infinite myriads of beings in the universe at the same instant of time, as clearly, as if there were only one individual existing. And our looking upon these opportunities as altogether confusions, is for want of viewing them properly by the light of reason and revelation.

The words in the text rendered, "*Shall not believe*," should be rendered, *will not believe*. Indeed, if the word *shall*, were to be taken according to its common accepta-
tion

tion, It would appear as if it were not in their power to believe it: and if so, how could they be blamed for an impossibility? which certainly must be the case, if God had positively decreed, that they should not believe it.

IV. I come now to point out what will be the unhappy consequences of despising this work of God.

1. They will be left in a carnal, blind, and unconverted state. Their disbelieving the truths of the gospel, will hinder the Lord from working this work upon them; the same as our Lord said of his own countrymen, "*He could not do many miracles there, because of their unbelief.*" Prejudiced people will neither hear for themselves, nor converse freely with those who know these things by experience; consequently, they remain stupidly ignorant.

2, They will be despised of God. "*God hates the workers of iniquity; the proud he beholds afar off.*" Those who despise this work, provoke God to do to them as Jesus Christ did to the barren fig-tree, "*Henceforth, let no fruit grow on thee for ever.*"

There cannot fall a greater curse upon any person, than to be forsaken, and given up of God. "*Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.*" Saint Paul, says, "*God gives up such persons, to strong delusions to believe a lye, that they might be damned, who believe not the truth.*" How terrible it is to be given up of God! No greater curse can attend any person in this world. Where persons can sin with greediness, and without remorse of conscience, it is a very great proof that God has given them up: and if he leaves them, how fataly awful must be the consequence!

3. They

3. They will be forsaken in a dying hour. They have had no experience of this work of God in their life, and so will be without an interest in Christ at death. They want what some call the certificate, the assurance of God's favour, or the witness of the spirit.

How awful, to see a man leave the world, without the favour of Almighty God. No hope! no happiness! no confidence in his maker! all is gloomy and horrible! The world forsakes him, his friends cannot help him; and trouble will come upon him like a woman in travel, and he cannot escape! Depart he must! Death has got his commission and will not be bribed! Into eternity he must go, to give an account of himself to God!

" Terrible thought! shall I alone,
 " Who may be sav'd—shall I,—
 " Of all, alas! whom I have known,
 " Through sin for ever die?
 " While all my old companions dear,
 " With whom I once did live,
 " Joyful at God's right hand appear,
 " A blessing to receive:
 " Shall I—amidst a ghastly band,
 " Dragg'd to the judgment seat!
 " Far on the left with horror stand?
 " My fearful doom to meet?
 " While they enjoy his heav'nly love,
 " Must I in torments dwell?—
 " And howl, (while they sing hymns above)
 " And breathe the flames of hell?"

4. They will be rejected at the judgment day!

How

How will such despisers, wonder, and perish : at that most awful day of God ! How will they wonder to see themselves forsaken and rejected. They will wonder, how the riches, the honours or pleasures of the world so deluded them : how they could be so blind to their own interest, as ever to suffer themselves to be so deceived. But time is gone ! the soul is lost ! irrecoverably lost for ever !!

How terrible the thought ! once I was an inhabitant upon earth ; had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel. Once my neighbours and friends invited me to hear the word, but I turned a deaf ear ! I would not part with my beloved sins : I would not forsake all for Christ. Now all possibility of my salvation is for ever gone ! Time is no more ! Sabbaths are all over ! No more Gospel sermons ! Ministers have given up their office : and even Christ himself is no longer a mediator and advocate ! The Judgment is set ! The books are opened ! Sentence must pass, "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !" All hope is gone ! The soul is lost ! And now, there is nothing to expect, but eternal DAMNATION.

What wringing of hands ! What tearing of hair ! What cursing of one another, world without end ! How undescribably dreadful to bear the wrath of God, and endure the flames of hell-fire for ever and ever ! for ever and ever ! Who can bear the thought ? The God that made them, will laugh at their calamities, and mock when their fear cometh ! "I have called, but ye have refused : I have stretched out my arm, but no man regarded ; truly and emphatically it may then be said ; "The great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ? Rev. vi. 17.

Draw

V, Draw some inferences from the whole.

1. And is the Lord working such a glorious work in our days? A work of conviction, conversion, and sanctification. Let us then no longer shut our eyes against the light. Although the Lord does not carry on his work exactly according to our views, let us not reject it on that account.

We certainly live in the latter days, when God is about to perform a great work in the earth. Whether he is preparing his people for persecution, or the universal spread of the Gospel, he alone can best determine; but without doubt, some important event is at hand. O that it may be the latter, the glorious commencement of the happy Millenium: "When all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

2. This work, has been so powerfully carried on, even among our people, for this last two or three years, that in *Yorkshire* alone, the year before last, there were between five and six thousand brought to God: and the last year, it has spread still more gloriously into many other places.

Can we expect that a work, so powerful, speedy and effectual, should be carried on without some thing remarkable? Let us not then reject and despise it, because it is carried on in an extraordinary manner.

Effectual fervent prayer, and the preaching of the word, seem to be the most useful means in this work: let these means be duly prized, for those who despise them, endanger their own salvation.

3. In this great work, two things especially are to be avoided

avoided. The first is, thinking every thing that is done to be of God. The second is, that there is nothing of God in it: but that it is all from the disturbed passions of the people.

As to the first, unnatural cries, or irreverent expressions, are not to be justified by the scriptures; yet, praying or singing heartily, and joining fervently in giving a hearty amen to the several petitions of prayer, this is right, and what ought to be in all Christian congregations. If that which favors of enthusiasm, rant and wildness can be prevented or checked, it is better; and if the managers time things well, and have wisdom sufficient, it may be done. At any rate, it is necessary to exercise patience, and do nothing rashly, but let charity put the best construction upon matters: as in many cases, time itself will remedy them.

But secondly, to say there is nothing of God in it, is in the highest degree absurd. Pray why is it, that different persons are wrought upon just in the same way? Why is it that they are brought into such distress, so suddenly, so powerfully, and sometimes some of them without even being in the same place? Why is it that even children, who are not capable of deceiving have the same work upon them, and are set at liberty just in the same way? some of which are not more than eight, ten, or twelve years of age? And why is it that those who profess to be convinced and converted in a few hours, perhaps within one hour, are now the most steady persons in our society? If it were merely natural, and only a touch upon the passions, as some call it, is it possible that it should be lasting?

4. Objection. But there are impostors among you,
and

and suppose there be; what does this prove? but that the work itself is real; for you allow, they are not all imposters. Let us therefore be aware of speaking against such a work, lest we should be found fighting against God. 'Tis a very dangerous thing, for even good people, thro' a misguided judgment, to take part against God. If you cannot approve, at least suspend your judgment for the present; time and circumstances may concur to prove more fully what is truth.

Lastly. Let all ministers be careful, not to oppose this work; by exaggerating and exposing every little unfavourable circumstance that occurs, to render the work ridiculous. If any persons ought to possess a great degree of charity, surely they are those who preach it to others. 'Tis much more easy to find fault with such a work, in a kind of religious chit chat, than to be a means of forwarding it. The one may be done without denying ourselves, and taking up our cross, but the other cannot. The one may create a laugh from luke-warm professors, but the other is an entire opposition to every thing of the kind.

Let us then have our hearts deeply engaged in the work of God, and reckon our labours almost lost, if we see no fruit of it. May the zeal of the Lord's house eat us up: and may we be like minded with the prophet, Isa. chap. lxii. 1. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness; and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

S O M E
D I R E C T I O N S

T O

Forward this WORK.

1. **LET** all ministers of Christ keep their own souls alive to God, and carefully avoid every thing that would damp the fervor of the mind. 'Tis all in vain to expect any great work without this; men must be like flames of fire themselves, if they mean to set others on fire. God uses instruments, but chiefly those who have most of God in them.

2. Let such as are elders, or leaders among the people, be like-minded with the preachers; and as much as possible live in the same spirit. Let them also come forward to the help of the Lord against the mighty. 'Tis not enough barely to rejoice in the work of the Lord; but they must stand forward freely, courageously, and in faith, if they mean to help on this work. Prayer is one principal mean of carrying it on with rapidity, and every child of God

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ought to be like-minded herein. 'Tis not always those who have the greatest gifts that are of the greatest use; but principally those who have most of the spirit, and possess the greatest fervor. While persons are backward in this duty, there is little hope of their usefulness. There must either be a spring within, "The love of Christ constraining them," or they will do no great good to them that are without.

3. Your prayers should not be general, but particular; not indeterminate, but determinate, not for sin in general, but for your sins in particular; and you must bring the matter to a point; urge the penitent to come to Christ directly, believingly, and fervently; and to look for the blessing at that time. Expect God to work while you pray, to answer while you speak, and to open while you thus knock at mercy's door. Be like wrestling Jacob, like the importunate widow, yea, like poor blind Bartimeus. God only waits to see our importunity, to hear our cries, and to prove that we will not go without the blessing: then he frequently answers in a most singular manner. At such times, have particular respect to God's presence, and his promises; look for their accomplishment, and consider he is an unchangeable Being, and therefore cannot be more willing to save at any other time than now. The principal reason why prayer is so singularly useful, is, because it has such a tendency to open the heart; perhaps more so, than any other means. The address being immediately to God, creates a solemnity of spirit; the fervency of the petition engages attention, and the pouring out the spirit in answer to prayer, is the chief reason why so much good

is done by this mean in particular: therefore, pray on and never faint, and remember God's hands are always open; and 'tis only our hearts that need opening, in order to receive blessings from his gracious throne.

4. Another thing necessary to be done on some occasions is, after many fervent prayers have been offered up, if there is no answer, it may be proper and advantageous, to dismiss the congregation, and desire only those to stop who are particularly distressed, with such as have faith in God; who believe that he both can and will deliver. Unbelief, is like an Achan in the camp: therefore, all who stagger at the promise, had better withdraw. Then let the faithful direct their prayers for the person or persons in distress, and particularly pray for the thing they then want, and no doubt, God will answer immediately: and such answers to prayer greatly strengthen the faith of believers.

5. Another useful means is, whenever you have an opportunity, speak lovingly, freely, and plainly to one another on these subjects, as it will greatly tend to enkindle your devotion. If you spend any time with Christian people, either by accident or design, improve as much of it as possible by singing and prayer: thereby your visits will be rendered a blessing to one another; and you will never part without being better for meeting. Thus you will edify one another; stir up each other's faith, hope, and love, and be a means of leading one another into God: which ought to be the great end of all Christian conversation.

6. Lastly.

6. Lastly, Live in a constant deadness to this world in affection. Let your constant motto be, "Holiness to the Lord." Keep your spirits crucified to the world. Live a life of faith, and strive to imitate your master, and to advance in holiness of heart and life every day. Let every creature lead you to God, then will you see him in all things. Trace his providential and redeeming grace in all its branches, and it will greatly tend to produce love and obedience: thus living and dying, you shall with joy enter into the presence of your Lord.

